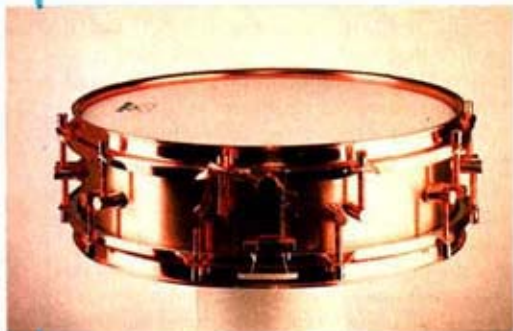


## Sonor And Remo Piccolo Snares



**Sonor HLD593 Signature Bronze Piccolo**

Sonor recently unleashed what could be termed "the world's most esoteric snare drum" with their new *Signature Series Bronze* piccolo snare. The *Signature Bronze* is a 4 x 14 drum, with a one-piece cast bronze shell. All fittings (hoops, lugs, rods, etc.) are copper-plated to give the drum a golden appearance. This all makes for one weighty drum; the *Signature Bronze* is probably the heaviest snare I've ever lifted!

The drum has 20 lugs (ten per side), with the standard Sonor slotted rods. Heavy-gauge flanged hoops are used for more effective tuning and a solid sound. To dampen the drum, Sonor includes a matching copper-plated clip-on external muffler.

A stick-shift lever cross-throw strainer is mounted to the shell. The butt end contains the fine-tension knob to adjust the snare wires. Cording is used to hold the 24-strand snares (which, by the way, have chromed ends, clashing with the drum's golden look. Call the Fashion Police!) The strainer works extra-smooth, and is virtually silent, with no snare "rap" when switching on or off.

The drum I received to test came with a coated *Ambassador* batter and a transparent *Ambassador* snare-side head. Even without a thinner *Diplomat* bottom head, the piccolo managed to present an extremely sensitive, crisp sound. Any delicate passages played were perfectly audible. During heavier playing, the drum didn't choke up at all, and had good volume. Rimshots were solid-sounding and rang right out. Latin-style rim clicks were round and not boxy-sounding. In every situation I tried it in, the drum's sound was clear, undistorted, and distinguishable.

I'll keep this short and simple by saying that the *Signature Bronze* piccolo is of the utmost professional quality, engineering-wise and cosmetically, with top-of-the line sound characteristics. Unfortunately, though, it carries an equally professional

(read: high) price tag, which, without a doubt, is out of the spending range of many players. The drum retails at \$1,300.00. (If you really want to go all out, Sonor is also producing a copper-finish *Signature* snare stand, with a hinged tripod leg base and lever-operated basket, at \$430.00 retail.)



**Sonor D420 Piccolo**

Don't despair from what you've just read, because Sonor hasn't forgotten the "poorer people," and also offers a 3 1/2 x 14 chrome-finish piccolo snare, made of ferro-manganese steel. The *D420* piccolo also has 20 lugs with slotted rods, and the same strainer as the *Signature* (but chrome-plated). Practically all other design specs are the same as the *Signature Bronze*, except of course for the plating and shell material.

Being a half-inch shallower than the *Signature*, the *D420* sounded a bit higher than the 4 x 14, as one would expect. The steel-shell drum still retained its sensitivity, and maybe even has a touch more volume. It was more "open"-sounding than the bronze-shelled *Signature*, and perhaps livelier. But it still had the capability of a delicate response when needed. Sonor is renowned for its high standards; the *D420* is certainly no exception. Retail price is \$490.00.



**Remo MasterTouch Piccolo**

Remo's new *MasterTouch* line includes the company's first 3 1/2 x 14 piccolo snare. Like all other Remo drums, it has an *Acousticon* phenolic shell, and *Quadura* covering. The drum has ten double-ended lugs, a single venthole, and no internal muffling. A newly-designed strainer throws off from the center via a large thumb lever. Both

sides of the strainer have fine-tension knobs. When released, the throw-off lever drops the entire assembly to an almost 90 degree angle, to fully drop the snares. The strainer is extremely simple, but worked quite smoothly and didn't bind up. Twenty-strand wire snares are used, and are held with plastic strips. The drum I tested came with a coated *Ambassador* batter and an *Ambassador* snare-side head.

The *MasterTouch* piccolo had good volume, with an alert, snappy response. It wasn't too thin-sounding and was capable of a reasonably wide dynamic range. In fact, I was content to use this piccolo as my primary snare drum. With the snares off, it gave a tight, timbale-like sound. *Diplomat* heads would probably enable the drum to be tuned up to a higher pitch and "pop" more.

A mirror-gold *Quadura* covering was on the drum I played; other Remo colors may be available by special request. Suggested retail list price is \$224.00.

—Bob Saydlowski, Jr.



## Zildjian Piggyback

In recent years, it has become popular to mount two cymbals together, producing a dry, short sound best described as a "splat." Terry Bozzio mounts various combinations of cymbals in this manner, and Dave Weckl has a China mounted over a crash, which he uses for punctuation. But there has been no particular standard in terms of what cymbal combination produces the best results.

Zildjian has attempted to standardize things a bit by introducing a cymbal specifically designed to be used in conjunction with another cymbal: the *EFX Piggyback*. The cymbal is 12" in diameter, has a China-type profile, and is very thin and lightweight. Its size and shape make it ideal for a variety of mounting applications. You can mount it right side up on ride or crash cymbals, or you can invert a ride or crash and mount an inverted *Piggyback* inside of it. You could also mount a larger cymbal over the *Piggyback*, or mount a small splash inside an inverted one.

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to matching a *Piggyback* with another cymbal, and experimentation is definitely called for. Generally, when mounting two cymbals together, you'll get that basic "splat" sound, but within that you can get some variation. The pitch will be affected by the cymbal that you are using with the *Piggyback*. We tried a *Piggyback* inverted inside an 18" A Zildjian crash as well as inside a 17" K Zildjian. While the overall character was the same, the pitch was significantly different.

We also found that the sound could be varied quite a bit by how tightly the cymbals were held together by the wing nut. We experimented with an inverted *Piggyback* mounted inside an inverted 17" crash. When angled and screwed down tightly, there was very little sound. When mounted fairly flat with little or no tightening of the wing nut, the cymbals would vibrate against each other for a couple of seconds. Various degrees of tightening the wing nut produced various effects, ranging from a fairly nice sizzle effect to a rather annoying rattle. There were also differences in sound depending on whether we struck only the edge of the 17" or both cymbals together.

We had interesting results when we mounted a *Piggyback* underneath a 20" K Light Ride. By placing a very thin piece of felt between the bells and angling the cymbals just a little, we were able to get just a hint of a "trash" sound when playing on the ride cymbal. I must mention that it took quite a bit of experimenting on our part to determine the optimum thickness of the felt and the right amount of tilt on the cymbals.

We encountered one potential problem. We borrowed three *Piggyback* cymbals for review, and one of them was slightly warped. That was only a problem in certain applications, where we were trying to get one cymbal to vibrate evenly against the other (as in the above example of the *Piggyback* mounted under the ride). Given the thinness of these cymbals, it's easy to see why they could be prone to warp, so you might want to check for that before you make your purchase.

Zildjian's promo for this cymbal states that it can also be used as a small China. The MD editors who tried it felt that it was too thin and high-pitched for that use, and preferred it in combination with another cymbal. But that's not to say that someone else wouldn't be able to use it by itself and be pleased with the sound.

The EFX *Piggyback* has a list price of \$164.00, which is comparable to what you might spend on a 17" crash. Considering that the *Piggyback* can be used in several different ways—depending on what you mate it with—it might not be a bad investment if you're looking for something different.

—Rick Mattingly

## Holz



Here's a nifty little accessory device that can improve both the sound and the cosmetic appearance of your bass drum. A *Holz* is a plastic reinforcement ring designed to fit into the front head of a bass drum where a sound hole has been cut out. The major function of the *Holz* is to reinforce the edge of the head where it has been cut—thereby preventing damage and improving the sound. The *Holz* also improves the overall appearance of the front head by giving the sound hole a finished appearance, rather than the exposed edge of the drumhead—which can often be somewhat ragged-looking if the cutting job was not done well.

The *Holz* unit is comprised of two plastic rings that fit on either side of the drumhead, sandwiching it in between. The side that faces front is rounded and smooth, and contains eight small bolts that extend back into the drumshell. The backing ring is flat, and has eight holes to receive the eight bolts. Plastic nuts, shaped like the tops of tuning lugs and operated by a drumkey, hold the two rings together once the device has been placed.

We tested both the 4" and the 6" models of *Holz* under a variety of playing applications. They were easy to install, and certainly did give a finished, professional look to the bass drum head. (A choice of flat black, chrome, or brass finish is available for cosmetic variety.) We did find that we had to be very careful when tightening the plastic nuts onto the metal bolts. It was very easy to strip the inside threads of the nuts, thereby rendering them useless. Yet it was very important that the nuts be *secure*, since the *Holz* had a tendency to rattle if the two halves weren't firmly joined. (As a matter of fact, we had problems with rattling on a couple of the devices, no matter *how* we tightened them.) This made us a bit dubious about how many times a *Holz* could be taken apart and used again before the nuts would become totally useless. (But then again, how often does one need to change the front bass drum head?) In fairness to the makers of *Holz*, they do provide very specific instructions for installation, and those instructions include clearly indicated cautions regarding overtightening the nuts. (Personally speaking, I might

opt to use small metal nuts that would fit the existing bolts.)

In terms of sound, the *Holz* added solidity to the heads at the cutout, where an unreinforced head can sometimes sound weak and "flappy." This situation can often become worse if the edges of the hole are wrinkled or torn due to impact with microphones or hands adjusting muffling inside the drum. *Holz* prevent that wrinkling or tearing from happening, thereby giving the acoustic impression of a single vibrating body—closer to that of an uncut head.

A cutting tool, called a *Speedcutter*, is also available from the makers of *Holz*. Although it's certainly not a necessity (many drummers cut perfectly fine holes in their bass drum heads quite regularly), it does make cutting a neat, round hole quick and easy. It's basically a compass-like device, with a movable point (adjustable for different hole sizes) and a cutting wheel. You stick the point into the head at the desired location, spin the device around a couple of times, and—voila!—you have a nice, clean hole of exactly the desired diameter. The *Speedcutter* is designed to cut either 4" or 6" holes, in order to correspond to the existing *Holz* sizes, and lists at \$7.95. If you aren't expert at cutting holes in drumheads, this device might very well be worth the investment. (A high-tech version that cuts holes from 2" to 22" is available as well. Useful for drumtechs, drumshop service people, and others who might be doing a lot of hole cutting, this device is available for \$99.95.)

The existence of *Holz* is not, in and of itself, a reason to cut a hole in a bass drum head if you would not normally do so. But if you *do* normally cut such a hole, or if you have been considering doing so, the addition of a *Holz* could very well give you a stronger, more attractive look and sound. Suggested retail price for *Holz* is as follows: 4" black, \$14.95; 6" black, \$15.95; 4" chrome or brass, \$18.95; 6" chrome or brass, \$19.95. For further information, contact Holz, 2370 S. Redwood Road, Salt Lake City, Utah 84119, or call 1-800-223-3208.

Rick Van Horn





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